REAL ROMANCES OF THE BUSINESS WORLD

Big Missouri's Conversion

BY RICHARD SPILLANE.

a man of limited education, Big arl had a wonderfully extended vocabularly in profanity. He could quely than any man in the Black Hills gountry, and no gentleman who has served an apprenticeship in that district needs a post-graduate course. In addition he had a well developed thirst. He would drink with any white man, but he would not drink alone. He would gamble, too, as long as he owned a dollar, and to relieve the monotony of life he was perfectly willing, if properly provoked, to fight with any person who stood on two legs. Hig Missouri was at once the pride and the despair of the camp. He worked like a Troian, drank like a fish, gambled like a fool and swore like a troop of troopers. And yet he only had one enemy—himself.

He loved work just for the play it gave to his great, muscular body, just as he loved to royster for the opportunity it gave to expend his animal spirits. He rarely had much money conting to him at the end of the month, but when he rounded up at the paymaster's window with his timebook the paymaster never failed to start Big Missouri up, just to enjoy listening to the viclent adjectives Big Missouri would give vent to in expressing his opinion of the company, of the company's system, of the paymaster, of the paymaster's ways, and of the moneyed classes in general.

They paid Big Missouri three and a half a day, just as they did the rest of the miners, and they kept back one month's pay from every employe for reasons of their own. Every miner had a passbook and every miner had to served an apprenticeship in that dis-



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must be broken.

Whatever fog there had been in Missouri's mind from what he had imbided the night before, cleared suddenly. It was plain to him that ne was for the first time in his life face to face with death and eternity. It was not a question of hours, but of minutes, how long he could cling to that piece of timber. To let go and drop into the abyss might mean the end. If he was not killed instantly he probably would be still further crippied and lie there suffering the tortures of thirst, starvation and pain, until the last. There practically was no chance of rescue. The wind would wipe out his tracks up the mountainside within a few hours. He would be missed by the men in the bunk house, but they would suppose he only had gone on a spree, as he had various

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